

SEATTLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Information Bulletin #2006-2



Nightclub Fire Safety Requirements

Washington joins Rhode Island and Massachusetts as one of the first states to enact the requirements for retroactive sprinklers in nightclubs with occupant loads over 100 persons.

Nightclub Sprinkler Rule

Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1401, passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2005, requires installation of fire sprinkler systems in existing nightclubs statewide by December 2007. The law applies only to those businesses that meet the official definition of a nightclub.

In Seattle, Joint Assessment Team inspections and Fire Department public assembly inspections confirm there are on going problems at nightclubs with overcrowding and compromised exiting. These findings support the need for built-in protection for nightclub occupants.

Definition of Nightclub

The Washington State Building Code Council defines a nightclub as an establishment, other than a theater with fixed seating, which includes all of the following:

1. Provides live entertainment by paid performing artists or by way of recorded music conducted by a person employed or engaged to do so. Paid performing artists are those entertainers engaged to perform in a for-profit business establishment.
2. Has as its primary source of revenue the sale of beverages of any kind for consumption on the premises and/or cover charges;
3. Has an occupant load of 100 or more as determined by the fire code official; and
4. Includes assembly space without fixed seats considered concentrated (chairs only) or standing space in accordance with Table 1004.1.1 of the International Fire Code

Requirement for Sprinkler Systems

Beginning June 2006, the Seattle Fire Department will conduct inspections to determine if businesses meet the definition of a nightclub and are subject to the requirement for installation of a fire sprinkler system.

Required Plan

Nightclubs with an occupant load of 100 or more are required to develop a Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan. These plans must be submitted to the Seattle Fire Marshal's Office for review and approval. Approval of the Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan is necessary to avoid violation of the Seattle Fire Code.

Each Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan should be specifically developed in consideration of the special characteristics of the building, the people who work there and the patrons who frequent the business. Visit the Seattle Fire Department website at www.seattle.gov/fire to download a guide to developing a Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan.

Fire Safety and Evacuation Plans are required to include the following:

1. Emergency egress or escape routes.
2. The preferred and any alternative means of notifying occupants of a fire or emergency.
3. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for carrying out duties in response to a fire emergency.
4. Procedures for personnel carrying out duties in response to a fire emergency.
5. The procedure for reporting a fire or other emergency to the fire department.

6. A procedure for accounting for employees and occupants after evacuation has been completed.
7. Floor plans indicating the following:
 - Detailed seating plan, occupant load, and occupant load limit.
 - Occupancy assembly point.
 - Exits.
 - Primary and secondary evacuation routes.
 - Areas of refuge.
 - Location of manual fire alarm boxes.
 - Location of portable fire extinguishers.
 - Location of occupant-use hose cabinets.
 - Location of fire alarm controls.

Plan Maintenance

The Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan should be reviewed and updated by management at least annually or more frequently if changes occur. The plans should be kept available in the workplace for reference and review by employees and copies should be furnished to the Seattle Fire Department upon request.

Staff Training

Well-trained employees are critical to a successful emergency evacuation. Employees must receive evacuation training as part of new employee orientation and annual training thereafter. Employees should be familiar with fire alarm signals, the procedures detailed in the Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan, and the importance of workplace fire prevention.

Employees must understand that it is their responsibility to initiate and guide an emergency evacuation of the facility when a fire emergency occurs. Upon hearing the fire alarm, employees should turn off all music and turn on the lights. This will make it easier for guests to hear the fire alarm and the evacuation instructions being given by staff. These directions should guide guests to the exits via the stairs, not elevators. Once outside it is important to move guests away from the building.

Training Tools

The Seattle Fire Department Public Education Office can support staff training needs with the following resources.

- Call 206-386-1337 to reserve the *Public Assembly Fire Safety* training video.
- Visit the website at www.seattle.gov/fire to download information bulletins, fire fact sheets, and other fire safety training materials.

Fire Drills

An employee fire drill must be scheduled every 120 days. Drills should be scheduled in a manner that provides all employees with an opportunity to participate in a fire drill at least once a year. Create a logbook to document fire drills. This information should be used to evaluate employee training and improve evacuation procedures.